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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4077
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
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RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002589

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/19/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [OSCE](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: URGING PRO-KURDISH DTP PARTY TO CONDMEN
PKK TERRORIST VIOLENCE

REF: A. ANKARA 2441

[1](#)B. ANKARA 2412

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney, for reasons 1.4(b),(d)

1.(C) Summary: Following the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party's (DTP's) ambivalent public response to the PKK massacre of 12 civilians (ref A), DCM contacted DTP MP and group chair Sirri Sakik. She told Sakik the DTP must unequivocally condemn violence if it wanted to help bring a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish problem. Sakik deplored the September 29 attack and the use of violence in general, but said the DTP could not outright condemn the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), for fear of alienating DTP's political base. DCM countered that DTP had a historic chance to make progress; they needed to proceed with courage and vision to condemn PKK violence and prove their commitment to advancing Turkey's democratic process. End summary.

2.(C) DCM contacted Sakik on the heels of a PKK massacre of 12 persons in southeastern Turkey. Following the incident, DTP issued a statement that deplored the attack but also questioned the immediate assumption that the PKK was responsible, and criticized the government's continued offensive operations in the Southeast (ref A). DCM emphasized repeatedly that for DTP to have a credible voice the party must unequivocally condemn violence and PKK terrorism. Sakik, DTP's party group chair and an MP from Mus, condemned the attack and the use of violence in general. DTP could not, however, outright condemn the PKK outright because it would dissolve their political base. DTP constituents, he said, all have a relative who is either "in the mountains, in prison, or in a grave." (Note: Sakik has one brother who is serving a life sentence for his crimes as a PKK member and another who was shot in the back of the head while fighting in the army against the PKK.)

3.(C) Sakik noted DTP's attempts at peaceful dialogue since entering parliament this fall for the first time since 1991. DTP leader Ahmet Turk had set a positive tone at the August 4 swearing-in ceremony by shaking hands with Nationalist Action Party (MHP) chairman Devlet Bahceli; Sakik and others had publicly stated DTP's desire to work toward the peaceful resolution of the Kurdish problem within parliament; and DTP MPs had reached out to all parties in parliament. Neither the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) nor the

opposition had responded in kind. AKP leaders had referred to Turkey's "cultural richness" but had failed to follow through with any concrete action. President Gul's outreach had been positive, but they were waiting for something concrete. Opposition party MPs had lashed out at DTP in public and shunned them in parliament, even refusing to sit in the same hallway with them.

4.(C) Sakik said the continuing judicial campaign against DTP (ref B) also stifled its ability to build bridges. Prosecutors were exercising a double standard, ignoring the constitutional guarantee of parliamentary immunity and continuing prosecutions against DTP MPs, while (properly, he said) suspending cases against MPs in other parties who were accused of serious crimes such as murder. Other pressure included a recent incident where two gunmen fired at DTP headquarters in Ankara on October 3. Although one suspect was apprehended, he was released the same day.

5.(C) In fact, he said, his constituents had given him and other DTPers the mandate to come to Ankara and effect change peacefully. He told of elderly Kurdish men, and women with their hands hennaed, sending him off to Ankara with a plea to stop the violence. Sakik emphasized that the DTP does not want Turkey's division; otherwise they would not be in parliament. They want recognition of their cultural identity, which he understands would be enshrined in AKP's proposed revision of the existing constitution. These few words, he believed -- and he pointed to a statement to this effect by imprisoned PKK leader Ocalan as well -- would create sufficient leverage for them to get the PKK to lay down arms.

6.(C) DCM acknowledged difficulties some DTP members had

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encountered and said, precisely for that reason, the party must categorically condemn violence in all forms in order to be an agent of change in Turkey. The USG and EU stand ready to help the DTP in its stated desire of peaceful resolution to the Kurdish problem but can do so only if the party unequivocally condemns violence. Sakik said DTP had condemned violence in past incidents, such as the May 27 suicide bombing in a popular Ankara shopping district, and would do so in the future. Continued pressures on the party would constrain the DTPs ability to effect change.

7.(C) Comment: This will be an uphill struggle. Our message to Sakik appears to have had some limited effect. Following a PKK ambush on October 7 that killed 13 Turkish soldiers in southeastern Sirnak province, DTP issued an unusually strong statement condemning the attack and calling for an end to violence on all sides. And in the October 17 parliamentary debate that preceded authorization of a cross-border operation into Iraq against the PKK, the DTP speaker stated, "Every drop of blood shed makes it harder to dress the wound," called for a democratic solution to the problem, and stressed that DTP had come to Ankara to resolve these problems. In the face of continued pressure, including PKK attacks that perpetuate a crisis atmosphere, it will be an enormous challenge for moderates such as Sakik to convince the party as a whole uniformly to espouse constructive positions. End comment.

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